

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 AID-05

COME-00 EB-07 FRB-01 TRSE-00 XMB-04 OPIC-06 CIEP-02

LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 /081 W
----- 041616

P R 061900Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7691

INFO USIA WSHDC PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

AMEMBASSY CARACAS

AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

UNCLAS PORT OF SPAIN 1028

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, EGEN, ECLA, TD

SUBJ: PRIME MINISTER WILLIAMS ATTACKS TRANSNATIONALS

SUMMARY: ON THE EVE OF THE ECLA CONFERENCE IN PORT OF SPAIN, PRIME MINISTER ERIC WILLIAMS DELIVERED A LENGTHY ATTACK ON TRANSNATIONAL CORPORATIONS (TNCS) WHICH HE TERMED THE "BIG PROBLEM FACING THE WORLD TODAY." DR. WILLIAMS CALLED FOR CONCERTED INTERNATIONAL ACTION TO CONTROL THE TNCS AND NOTED THAT THIS SUBJECT WOULD BE A MAJOR CONCERN OF THE ECLA CONFERENCE. END SUMMARY.

1. DR. WILLIAMS MADE HIS REMARKS ON MAY 3 IN A SPEECH TO A SEMINAR ON "THE ROLE OF THE MULTINATIONAL CORPORATION IN A DEVELOPING SOCIETY" WHICH HAD BEEN ARRANGED ON SHORT NOTICE BY THE TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO LABOUR CONGRESS TO PROVIDE A FORUM FOR THE SPEECH. DR. WILLIAMS COUCHED HIS EXTEMPORANEOUS COMMENTS IN GENERAL TERMS, MOSTLY REPLAYING CRITICISMS OF TNCS MADE IN STUDIES BY US AND UNCLASSIFIED

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OTHER AUTHORS WITHOUT SPECIFICALLY RELATING THEM TO THE

TRINIDAD SCENE. ONE CITATION WHICH DID STRIKE CLOSE TO HOME WAS A QUOTATION FROM THE PRESIDENT OF DOW CHEMICAL IN WHICH HE SAID THAT HE WOULD LIKE TO BUY AN ISLAND ON WHICH HE COULD LOCATE THE HEADQUARTERS OF HIS COMPANY BEYOND THE CONTROL OF ANY NATIONAL GOVERNMENT EXCEPT FOR THE LOCAL OPERATIONS IN INDIVIDUAL COUNTRIES. "WE WOULD EVEN PAY THE NATIVES HANDSOMELY TO LEAVE".

3. DR. WILLIAMS CITED NUMEROUS EXAMPLES OF THE WAYS IN WHICH SOME TNCs EVADE THE CONTROL AND TAXES OF NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS, OF HOW THEY SHOP AROUND THE GLOBE FOR SOURCES OF LABOR WHICH WERE CHEAP AND TROUBLE-FREE, AND OF "RUTHLESS" OVERPRICING OF TNC PRODUCTS SOLD IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES. HE DESCRIBED THE IMPACT OF TNCs ON THE ECONOMIES OF VARIOUS LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES INCLUDING MEXICO, BRAZIL, CHILE, ARGENTINA, AND VENEZUELA AND THEN, TAKING VENEZUELA AS AN EXAMPLE, READ A LONG LIST OF TNCs WHICH, HE SAID, DOMINATE VIRTUALLY EVERY SECTOR OF THE ECONOMY OF THAT COUNTRY WHICH HE CALLED "THE LAND OF THE MULTINATIONALS."

4. COMMENT: DESPITE THE FACT THAT THE ROLE OF TNCs IN TRINIDAD, ESPECIALLY TEXACO, IS A TOPIC OF CURRENT AND HOT DEBATE WITHIN THE COUNTRY, DR. WILLIAMS DID NOT ADDRESS THE SPECIFIC QUESTIONS OF THE GOVERNMENT'S GENERAL POLICY ON TNCs OR OF THE ROLE HE SAW TNCs PLAYING IN TRINIDAD'S FUTURE. HE DID USE THE OCCASION TO REASSURE LABOR THAT THE GOTT STILL SUPPORTED FREE COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AND WOULD NOT REMOVE THE UNIONS' RIGHT TO STRIKE IN ORDER TO ATTRACT TNCs TO TRINIDAD. DR. WILLIAMS' SELECTION OF VENEZUELA FOR PARTICULAR OPPROBRIUM FOR ALLOWING ITSELF TO BE DOMINATED BY TNCs WAS PROBABLY NOT COINCIDENTAL AND NO DOUBT RELATES TO THE CHARGES HE MADE SEVERAL WEEKS AGO THAT LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES, ESPECIALLY VENEZUELA, ARE ATTEMPTING TO RECOLONIZE THE CARIBBEAN. ALTHOUGH HE DREW NO PARTICULAR CONCLUSIONS AND DID NOT ANNOUNCE ANY NEW GOTT ACTIONS OR POLICIES, THE ARRANGEMENT OF THIS "SEMINAR" ON SHORT NOTICE SPECIFICALLY TO ENABLE THE PRIME MINISTER TO MAKE THIS STATEMENT ON TNC'S UNDOUBTEDLY WAS MEANT TO TELEGRAPH THE ISSUE WHICH THE GOTT WISHES ADDRESSED AT THE ECLA CONFERENCE OPENING TODAY IN TRINIDAD.

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